MIRROR OF THE SOUL

CANON JOHN VAUGHAN, M.A.

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THE SHORT COURSE SERIES

A MIRROR OF THE SOUL

GENERAL PREFACE

THE title of the present series is a sufficient indication of its purpose. Few preachers, or congregations, will face the long courses of expository lectures which characterised the preaching of the past, but there is a growing conviction on the part of some that an occasional short course, of six or eight connected studies on one definite theme, is a necessity of their mental and ministerial life. It is at this point the projected series would strike in. It would suggest to those who are mapping out a scheme of work for the future a variety of subjects which might possibly be utilised in this way.

The appeal, however, will not be restricted to ministers or preachers. The various volumes will meet the needs of laymen and

General Preface

Sabbath-school teachers who are interested in a scholarly but also practical exposition of Bible history and doctrine. In the hands of office-bearers and mission-workers the "Short Course Series" may easily become one of the most convenient and valuable of Bible helps.

It need scarcely be added that while an effort has been made to secure, as far as possible, a general uniformity in the scope and character of the series, the final responsibility for the special interpretations and opinions introduced into the separate volumes, rests entirely with the individual contributors.

A detailed list of the authors and their subjects will be found at the close of each volume.

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The Short Course Series

EDITED BY
REV. JOHN ADAMS, B.D.

A MIRROR OF THE SOUL

SHORT STUDIES IN THE PSALTER

BY THE

REV. JOHN VAUGHAN, M.A.
CANON RESIDENTIARY OF WINCHESTER

EDINBURGH: T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET
1913

TO

MY WIFE

WHO LOVES THE PSALTER

NO LESS IN SILENCE

THAN IN SONG

45205864 ✓

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"THERE is no one book which has played so large a part in the history of so many human souls. By the Psalms Augustine was consoled on his conversion, and on his death-bed. By the Psalms Chrysostom, Athanasius, Savonarola were cheered in persecution. With the words of a Psalm Polycarp, Columba, Hildebrand, Bernard, Francis of Assisi, Huss, Jerome of Prague, Columbus, Henry the Fifth, Edward the Sixth, Ximenes, Xavier, Melanchthon, Jewell, breathed their last. . . . The 68th Psalm cheered Cromwell's soldiers to victory at Dunbar. Locke, in his last days, bade his friend read the Psalms aloud, and it was whilst in rapt attention to their words that the stroke of death fell upon him. Lord Burleigh selected them out of the whole Bible as his special delight. They were the framework of the devotions and of the war-cries of Luther; they were the last words that fell on the ear of his imperial enemy Charles the Fifth."

DEAN STANLEY.

I

THE DIVERSITY OF THE PSALTER

I

THE DIVERSITY OF THE PSALTER

In the opening chapter of his book, *The Psalms in Human Life*, Mr. Prothero refers to the Hebrew legend that the harp of David would give forth music in the midnight when the wind swept across its strings. "The poetry of that tradition," he beautifully says, "is condensed in the saying that the Book of Psalms contains the whole music of the heart of man, swept by the hand of his Maker. In it are gathered the lyrical burst of his tenderness, the moan of his penitence, the pathos of his sorrow, the triumph of his victory, the despair of his defeat, the firmness of his confidence, the rapture of his assured hope. In it is presented the anatomy of all parts of the human

soul; in it, as Heine says, are collected 'sunrise and sunset, birth and death, promise and fulfilment—the whole drama of humanity.'"

1. A Mirror of the Soul.

It is this extraordinary variety of subject that gives the Psalter its unique character. There is hardly an experience of the human heart but what finds expression in it. Amid the thousand vicissitudes of human life, men turn to the Book of Psalms, and find in it, as St. Athanasius said, "a mirror of the soul." A few testimonies on this point may be not unfitly quoted. "What," asks the judicious Hooker,[1] "is there necessary for man to know which the Psalms are not able to teach? . . . Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of Providence over this world, and the promised joys of the world

[1] *Ecclesiastical Polity*, v. xxxvii. 2.

to come,—all good to be either known, or done, or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth." There is no grief or disease incident unto the soul of man, no wound or sickness named, for which there is not in this treasure-house a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found. "There are feelings," said Frederick Robertson of Brighton,[1] the greatest English preacher of the nineteenth century, "of which we do not speak to each other; they are too sacred and too delicate. If we do speak of them they lose their fragrance, become coarse; nay, there is even a sense of indelicacy and exposure. Now the Psalms afford precisely the right relief for this feeling; wrapped up in the form of poetry, metaphor, etc., that which might seem exaggerated is excused by those who do not feel it; while they who do can read them, applying them, without the suspicion of uttering *their own* feelings. Hence their soothing power; and hence, while other portions of Scripture may become obsolete, they remain

[1] *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 106.

the most precious parts of the Old Testament. For the heart of man is the same in all ages." "From pompous ritual and national pæan," writes Professor Moulton,[1] "down to the cry of a solitary soul in the dark, there is nothing that cannot find a record in the Book of Psalms." "Every form of human sorrow," said Charles Kingsley,[2] in one of his most striking sermons preached before the University of Cambridge, "doubt, struggle, error, sin; the nun agonizing in the cloister; the settler struggling for his life in Transatlantic forests; the pauper shivering over the embers in his hovel, and waiting for kind death; the man of business striving to keep his honour pure amid the temptations of commerce; the prodigal son starving in a far country, and recollecting the words which he learnt long ago at his mother's knee; the peasant boy trudging afield in the chill dawn, and remembering that the Lord is his shepherd, therefore he shall not want—all shapes of humanity

[1] *The Psalms*, in "The Modern Readers' Bible," p. xii.
[2] *David*, p. 37.

have found, and will find to the end of time, a word said to their inmost hearts, and more, a word said for those hearts to the living God of heaven, by the vast humanity of David, the man after God's own heart." "All the wonders of Greek civilisation heaped together," said Mr. Gladstone, "are less wonderful than is the simple Book of Psalms—the history of the human soul in relation to its Maker." Truly, in the language of St. Augustine, "the Psalms are read in all the world, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

2. The Hymn-Book of the Church.

It may be taken as beyond dispute that it is this amazing variety of mood, and subject, and occasion, which gives the Psalms their catholicity, and combined with their spirituality, fits them, as Dr. Driver[1] says, to be the hymn-book, not only of the Second Temple, but also of the Christian

[1] *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. p. 346.

Church. This diversity is partly to be accounted for by the fact that the Psalter is the product, not of one mind, or of one age, but is a collection of religious lyrics composed by many different authors, and written at various times during a long period of national vicissitudes. Just as Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* is a selection of the best songs and lyrical poems in the English language, so is the Book of Psalms a collection of the finest Hebrew lyrics from the time of the monarchy to that of the Maccabees. Hence some of the psalms are national, some collective, some individual. Some are the communings of the soul with God, some the expression of congregational worship, some the outbursts of national thanksgiving.

There are personal psalms such as the 23rd ("The Lord is my Shepherd"), and the 63rd ("O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee"); some, like the 51st ("Have mercy upon me, O God"), and the *De Profundis* ("Out of the deep," 130), expressive of deep penitence; others, like the

32nd ("Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven"), full of the joy and blessedness of pardon. There are national psalms, bewailing the desolation of the sanctuary, as the 79th ("O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance"), or praying for the peace of Jerusalem, as the 122nd ("I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord"). Sometimes, perhaps more frequently than is commonly supposed, the poet speaks in the name of the nation. We have undoubted instances of this personification in Psalm 124 ("If the Lord Himself had not been on our side, let Israel now say"), and in Psalm 129 ("Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up"). The use of history as a means of moral instruction is abundantly justified in such psalms as the 78th ("Hear My law, O My people"), and the 105th and 106th. Then there are royal psalms, often pregnant with Messianic teaching, celebrating, it may be, a king's marriage, as Psalm 45 ("My heart is inditing of a good matter"), or embodying a solemn prayer that God will endow the

king with wisdom and the spirit of righteousness, as Psalm 72 ("Give the king Thy judgments, O God").

Many of the psalms again celebrate the glory of God in the wonders and beauties of creation, of which striking examples may be found in Psalms 8 ("O Lord, our Governor"), 19 ("The heavens declare the glory of God"), and 104 ("Praise the Lord, O my soul"). Now and again we find incorporated in the Psalter smaller collections of poems, such as the Songs of Degrees[1] (A.V.), or Songs of Ascents, which doubtless constituted "The Pilgrims' Handbook," intended for the use of those pious Hebrews—reminding us of the Canterbury pilgrims in after ages—who went up to Jerusalem for the yearly festivals. In this collection is not only the Traveller's Psalm ("I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills" 121), in which we almost seem to hear the voices of the pilgrims chanting on their way; but one or two family pieces, of which the 127th ("Except the Lord build the house") has been beautifully called the

[1] Psalms 120–134.

Hebrew *Cottar's Saturday Night.*[1] Other smaller collections may be the *Hallel* (Psalms 113–118), and the Hallelujah Psalms (146–150) to which we shall have occasion to refer later. Indeed the Psalter abounds in liturgical compositions, specially designed for the use of the Second Temple, but not less appropriate to the services of the Christian Church.

In addition to these aspects of the Psalter, many of the psalms are of the nature of meditations—some on God's moral government of the world, some in praise of the law, some on the character of the upright man ; others with a more direct reference to the individual circumstances of the poet. In many instances again, the psalms rise above all local and immediate circumstances, and speak the language of all time. Of this class we may take as an illustration "that ancient psalm, that psalm of eternity," beginning "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge, from one generation to another." "The 90th

[1] Professor James Robertson, *The Poetry and Religion of the Psalms*, p. 222.

psalm," says Isaac Taylor, "might be cited as perhaps the most sublime of human compositions, the deepest in feeling, the loftiest in theological conception, the most magnificent in its imagery." Since the year 1662 it has found a place, most appropriately, in the Burial Service of the Church of England, and is now read every week over the remains of thousands of the sons of men. Dr. Watts' well-known hymn, one of the finest in the English language, is based upon this psalm—

> "O God, our help in ages past,
> Our hope for years to come,
> Our shelter from the stormy blast,
> And our eternal home."

3. The Devotional Handbook of the World.

Such are some of the varied aspects of this wonderful book, selected by way of illustration. It cannot therefore be a matter of surprise that the Psalter has appealed to the religious instinct of mankind in a way that is true of no other composition. "There is one

book of sacred poetry," said Dean Church in a lecture delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral,[1] "which is unique of its kind, has nothing like it, or second to it. It expresses the ideas and the feelings of a religion of which the central and absorbing object of faith is One who is believed to be the absolute, universal, Living God, the One God of the world and all things, Almighty, All-Holy, Supreme. . . . Whenever the Book of Psalms began to be put together, and whenever it was completed, from that time in the history of the world, the religious affections and the religious emotions formed their final, their deepest, their unsurpassed expression. From that time to this there never has been a momentary pause, when somewhere or other the praises of His glory and the prayers of His worshippers have not been rehearsed in its words."

The Psalter has thus become "the devotional handbook of the world." Of the two hundred and eighty-three quotations from the Old Testament to be found in the New,

[1] Published in *The Gifts of Civilization*, p. 336.

no less than one hundred and sixteen are said to be from the Book of Psalms. It was a psalm that Christ and His disciples sang before they left the Upper Room on the night on which He was betrayed. With the words of a psalm upon His lips Jesus gave up the ghost. Among the early Christians psalms were sung at the love-feasts, and formed their morning and evening hymns. "They have furnished the bridal hymns, the battle songs, the pilgrim marches, the penitential prayers, and the public praises of every nation in Christendom, since Christendom was born."[1] They have provided mottoes for ancient families, for universities, for trade-guilds, for cities, for hospitals, for alms-houses, for lighthouses, and for innumerable coins, rings, and sundials.

"Of the many aspects presented by an English Cathedral," wrote the eloquent Archbishop Alexander,[2] "there is one which is often overlooked: it is *a shrine for the*

[1] Baldwin Brown, *The Higher Life*, p. 103.

[2] *The Witness of the Psalms*, p. 3.

Psalter." The Psalmists, he goes on to say, "cannot be put away from us, with an impatient shrug, to a more convenient season. At marriages and funerals, by sick-beds and in stately ceremonials, in churches and homes, they make their voices heard at every turn." The Psalter, moreover, is the sacred book, not of one Church or of one community; it is the sacred book of the world. In it the voice of controversy is silent; Catholic and Protestant, Episcopalian and Presbyterian, Anglican and Non-conformist, are at one. "The history of the psalms," wrote Bishop Perowne[1] in his epoch-making commentary on the Psalter, "is the history of the Church, and the history of every heart in which has burned the love of God. It is a history not fully revealed in this world, but one which is written in heaven. Surely it is holy ground. We cannot pray the psalms without realizing in a very special manner the communion of saints, the oneness of the Church militant, and the Church triumphant. We cannot pray the

[1] Vol. i. p. 40.

psalms, without having our hearts opened, our affections enlarged, our thoughts drawn heavenward. He who can pray them best is nearest to God, knows most of the spirit of Christ, is ripest for heaven."

II

COMMUNION WITH GOD

II

COMMUNION WITH GOD

It will be well to begin with that aspect of the Book of Psalms, which is its main characteristic, that which gives it its unique value, and which explains to us the reason why, in every age, it has appealed so forcibly to the religious instincts of men. We mean the deep sense of communion with God which is evinced in psalm after psalm of this wonderful collection. Nowhere else in the Bible, except in the life and teaching of our Blessed Lord, do we meet with the same intense spirit of devotion, the same clear recognition of the union of the human soul with its divine Master and Friend. This, as Dean Stanley well said, is "the crowning glory"[1] of the Psalter. "All nature,"

[1] *The Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 131.

he adds, quoting from another,[1] "is ransacked by the Psalmists for metaphors to express this single thought, 'God is for my soul, and my soul is for God.' Father, Brother, Friend, King, Master, Shepherd, Guide, are common titles. God is their Tower, their Glory, their Rock, their Shield, their Sun, their Star, their Joy, their Portion, their Trust, their Life. The Psalmist describes his soul as God's only and favourite child, His darling one. So it is that joy bursts out into praise, and all things look brilliant, and hardship seems easy, and duty becomes delight, and contempt is not felt, and every morsel of bread is sweet. The whole world seems fresh to him with sweetness before untasted."

1. Its Early Depth and Fulness.

Now what renders the depth and reality of the spiritual life, as exhibited in the Psalter, the more remarkable, is the early stage in the history of revelation to which the experiences belong. "Composed at a time of

[1] F. Newman, *The Soul.*

the great revelation," as Mr. Gladstone,[1] in his beautiful little preface to *The Psalter* written during his retirement at Hawarden Castle, well puts it, "earlier and less matured than that under which we live, and therefore presenting to us on particular subjects chequered and imperfect lights, the Psalter nevertheless remains to this day the first among all the records of the experiences of the human soul to Godward." The fact becomes the more striking if we compare the Psalms with other poetical compositions of the Old Testament. Songs of triumph like those of Miriam and of Deborah, prophecies like that of Balaam, lyrical retrospects as the Song of Moses, thanksgivings like Hannah's, or lamentations like that of David over Saul and Jonathan, even the mysterious Book of Job—these are to be understood under the circumstances of the time. But the Book of Psalms stands on an entirely different spiritual level. In it, as Dean Church has pointed out,[2] "the religious affections are full

[1] *The Psalter*, p. 3.

[2] *The Discipline of the Christian Character*, p. 56.

grown: it was the highest expression of them which the world was to see. The profoundest religious thinkers have met there what they feel after. The highest saint cannot soar higher to the eternal throne of justice and love." Here, it must be admitted, is something more than "the mere working of the mind of man." Indeed, we may go so far as to agree with Mr. Gladstone, that there are many verses of the Psalms on which, taken severally, we might be content, so lofty is their nature, to stake the whole argument for a divine revelation.

"In the Psalter then," as Dr. Driver[1] says, "the devotional element of the religious character finds its completest expression, and the soul is displayed in converse with God, disclosing to him its manifold emotions, desires, aspirations, or fears." And this spirit of personal communion with God belongs to the deep elemental ideas of true religion. It is with these permanent ideas that the

[1] *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. p. 346.

Psalmist is mainly concerned. He has to do with religion, not with theology. And whilst "creeds change, litanies remain the same." Personal religion, as Robertson of Brighton[1] truly says, "is the same in all ages. The deeps of our humanity remain unruffled by the storms of time which change the surface." How many of the psalms, written from two to three thousand years ago, might have been written yesterday; they describe the vicissitudes of spiritual life in an Englishman of to-day, as truly as in that of a Jew in the time of the monarchy or the exile.

2. Its Vivid Sense of the Divine.

Nowhere does this spirit of communion with God show itself more vividly than in the clearness with which the Divine Personality is portrayed. "Jehovah liveth, and blessed be my strong helper," is written, it has been well remarked, on the book, within and without. The inconceivable majesty, the unapproachable glory of God is fully realized; and yet this High and lofty One

[1] *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 75.

that inhabiteth eternity healeth those that are broken in heart, and giveth medicine to heal their sickness. On the one hand the Psalmist could cry, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, Thou art God from everlasting, and world without end"; on the other, he feels that this Infinite Being is yet near and tender. He can say, "O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee": "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God": "My soul fleeth unto the Lord; before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch."

"No sacred book of any nation," writes Professor Davison in his masterly article on the Book of Psalms in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*,[1] "has solved this fundamental problem of all religion, how to preserve at the same time the Infinity and the Personality of God, as has the Psalter." "Who would think," asks Dean Church,[2] "of pour-

[1] Vol. iv. p. 157.

[2] *The Gifts of Civilization*, pp. 365–6.

ing out his heart to the Indra of the Vedas; who would dream of being athirst for the Father Zeus of Homer, or longing after the Jupiter, though styled the Best and Greatest, of later times? It never occurred to these worshippers, that besides the sacrifices and praises . . . the soul could have secret yet real access, everywhere, every moment, to infinite compassion, infinite loving-kindness, infinite and all-sufficing goodness, to whom, as into the heart of the tenderest of friends it could pour out its distresses, before whom, as before the feet of a faithful comforter and guide, it could lay down the burden of its care, and commit its way. But this, I need not remind you," he goes on to say, "is the idea of religion which appears on the face of every single psalm. It is the idea of the unfailing tenderness of God, His understanding of every honest prayer, the certainty that in the vastness and the catastrophes of the world the soul in its own singleness has a refuge, is linked at the throne of the worlds to its own reward and strength, is held by the hand, is guided by

the eye, of One who cares for the weakest as much as He is greater than the greatest of His creatures."

3. Its Union of the Divine and Human.

We all take as illustrations of this sublime sense of communion with God two psalms, familiar to all of us, which reveal, in the most striking manner, the friendship of the soul with its Divine Creator—the 23rd Psalm and the 139th.

Psalm 23.

The 23rd Psalm is unrivalled in the whole collection for its entire trust in God. It depicts a peace so perfect, a serenity so profound, that death itself cannot disturb it. "It is demanded of a lyric poem," says Mr. Stopford Brooke in a beautiful sermon,[1] on this psalm, "that it should be a united whole. There must remain at the end of a perusal a single great impression. Now we find this poem impregnated with one feeling, the feeling of trust in God. This enters into all

[1] *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 58.

the images and their ideas. This it is which harmonizes all its contrasts, mellows all its changes, and unites into one whole the quiet contemplation of the first verses, the gloom of the fourth, the triumph of the fifth, and the combined retrospect and prophecy of the last. David's spirit of trust in God pervades the whole."

The imagery under which this trust is portrayed is taken from the pastoral life of the country. It comes with special force if the psalm be indeed that of the shepherd-king. In any case the figure would appeal to the imagination of the Hebrew people. The thought of a shepherd and his flock was bound up with their national life. The patriarchs were shepherds. Moses was a shepherd. David was a shepherd. The metaphor is frequent in the prophetical writings as applied both to Jehovah and to earthly kings. It may well have been, as Bishop Westcott suggests,[1] that David gathered up his own personal experiences, as a shepherd on the downs of Bethlehem,

[1] *The Revelation of the Father*, p. 79.

and as a ruler on the throne of Israel, when in the memorable confession which "lives through all time and beyond time," he said, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

For Christians the psalm has doubtless received additional lustre from the use made of the same metaphor by our Blessed Lord. It is indeed hardly possible for us to read the 23rd Psalm without associating the words with the divine declaration, "I am the Good Shepherd." In this sense the psalm has been used by myriads of Christian people; and has been rendered into verse by more than one English poet. George Herbert and Isaac Watts both made versions of it; and the famous paraphrase of Joseph Addison, "The Lord my pasture shall prepare," has added no little to his literary fame.

In the 23rd Psalm then we recognise in a marked degree the sense of entire confidence in God. It exhibits a condition of unruffled serenity and peace. It is, as the author of *Ecce Homo*[1] truly said, "the most complete picture of happiness that ever was

[1] Chapter i. p. 6.

or can be drawn. It represents that state of mind for which all alike sigh, and the want of which makes life a failure to most: it represents that Heaven which is everywhere if we could but enter it, and yet almost nowhere because so few of us can. The two or three who win it may be called victors in life's conflict; to them belongs the *regnum et diadema tutum*."

Psalm 139.

In Psalm 139 the sense of intimate communion with God finds its fullest expression. Indeed Aben Ezra[1] pronounced it to be the crown of all the Psalms. The poet, as it were, gazes on the attributes of Jehovah—His omniscience, His omnipresence, His omnipotence; and so far from seeking to escape from God, he desires only to yield himself more fully to the divine influence. "This," writes Dr. Maclaren in his illuminating work on the Book of Psalms,[2] "is the noblest utterance in the Psalter of pure and

[1] Quoted by Perowne, vol. ii. p. 438.

[2] "The Expositor's Bible," vol. iii. p. 383.

contemplative theism, animated and not crushed by the thought of God's omniscience and omnipresence. No less striking than the unequalled force and sublimity with which the psalm hymns the majestic attributes of an all-filling, all-knowing, all-creating God, is the firmness with which the singer's personal relation to that God is grasped. Only in the last verses is there reference to other men. In the earlier parts of the psalm there are but two beings in the Universe—God and the Psalmist. With impressive reiteration, God's attributes are gazed on in their bearings on him. Not mere omniscience, but a knowledge which knows *him* altogether; not mere omnipresence, but a presence that *he* can never escape; not mere creative power, but a power which shaped *him*, fill and thrill the Psalmist's soul. This is no cold theism, but vivid religion. Conscience and the consciousness of individual relation to God penetrate and vitalise the whole."

It is interesting to notice how strongly, from another standpoint, this psalm impressed

itself on the mind of Joseph Addison. He refers to it on more than one occasion. In the *Spectator* for 7th June 1712, he writes,[1] "I shall conclude my essay with observing that the two kinds of hypocrisy I have here spoken of, namely, that of deceiving the world and that of imposing on ourselves, are touched with wonderful beauty in the 139th Psalm. The folly of the first kind of hypocrisy is there set forth by reflections on God's omniscience and omnipresence, which are celebrated in as noble strains of poetry as any other I ever met with, either sacred or profane. The other kind of hypocrisy, whereby a man deceives himself is intimated in the two last verses, where the Psalmist addresses himself to the great Searcher of hearts in that emphatical petition, 'Try me, O God, and seek the garden of my heart: prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.'"

[1] Quoted by C. L. Marson in *The Psalms at Work*, p. 217.

4. The Element that Abides.

The question might be asked how far this last sentence, "the way everlasting," has reference to the life beyond death, or whether the Psalmist's thought is limited to that of communion with God here on earth. The question, it is clear, would involve the larger one as to how far the hope of immortality finds expression in the Psalter. The trend of opinion among modern Old Testament scholars is undoubtedly in the direction of limiting this and similar passages[1] to the experience of communion with God in this present state of existence. It must, however, be admitted that, if the hope of immortality be dim, yet in this psalm, and in those to which we have referred, "the germ or principle," as Dr. Kirkpatrick[2] puts it, of the doctrine of eternal life is present. The intimate communion with God of which they speak, as

[1] See specially Psalms xvi. 12, xvii. 16, xxxvi. 9, xlix. 15, and lxxiii. 23.

[2] See his "*Introduction*" to the Psalms, in "Cambridge Bible," vol. iii. p. xcv.

the highest happiness of man, cannot conceivably be limited to this present life. The pit of corruption, or the shadowy existence of Sheol, cannot be regarded as "the end of all for the friend of God." One who could say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee," who could cry, "O God, thou art my God," must, we instinctively feel, have God as his portion for ever.

We are not then doing violence to the inspired words of the Psalmists if we read them in the clearer light of Easter Day. The Psalter is "a prophetic manual of prayer" and devotion, and for us its pages are illuminated by the teaching of Him who brought life and immortality to light. We read the Psalms, we repeat them, as Archbishop Alexander[1] beautifully says, "in the College Chapel, in the Parish Church, sometimes with the elevating accessories of Cathedral worship, sometimes

'Where no organ's peal
Invests the stern and naked prayer,'

[1] *The Witness of the Psalms*, p. 147.

and they express for us the deepest and most sacred thoughts of spiritual communion." "More," he adds, "than fifty generations of Christian believers bear witness that, when we sing the Psalms with fair weather in the soul, we still hear sweet voices from distant hills, and the soft sighing of an eternal sea that flows towards the spot on which we stand."

III

THE GRACE OF MEDITATION

III

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In his beautiful and sympathetic book on the Christian Hermits, Charles Kingsley thus speaks of the value of the habit of meditation:—"We must remember," he says, "that without solitude, without contemplation, without habitual collection and recollection of our own selves from time to time, no great purpose is carried out, and no great work can be done; and that it is the bustle and hurry of our modern life which causes shallow thought, unstable purpose, and wasted energy, in too many who would be better and wiser, stronger and happier, if they would devote more time to silence and meditation; if they would commune with their own heart in their chamber, and be still."[1]

[1] *The Hermits*, p. 127.

A Mirror of the Soul

1. Its Recognition in Ancient Philosophy.

It is a practice which was recognised and carried out by the old pagan philosophers. The maxim, "Know thyself," was held in true reverence. Pythagoras urged his disciples to examine themselves every night before they retired to rest. Seneca tells us that he adopted the custom from one Sextius, who, "when the day was over, and he betook himself to his nightly rest, used to ask himself, what evil have you cured to-day? What vice have you resisted? In what particular have you improved?" "I, too, adopt this plan," said Seneca, "and I daily plead my cause with myself, when the light has been taken away, and my wife, who is now aware of my habit, has become silent; I carefully consider in my heart the entire day, and take a deliberate estimate of my deeds and words." So with Marcus Aurelius, the noblest of the pagan emperors, perhaps, as Lecky says,[1] "as nearly a perfectly virtuous man as has ever

[1] *History of European Morals*, vol. i. p. 249.

appeared upon our world." In his *Meditations*, he remarks[1] that men seek retreats for themselves, houses in the country, the seashore, or mountains—how modern this all sounds—but that every wise man has "a little territory of his own," into which, whenever he chooses, he can retire. It is the little territory of his own heart. "Retire," he says, "into thyself." Like St. Augustine,[2] in after days, he made a practice of "going up into the tribunal of his own conscience and setting himself before himself." He was ever, in the language of Tennyson,[3] bearing about—

> "A silent court of justice in his breast,
> Himself the judge and jury, and himself
> The prisoner at the bar."

There is need, in this age, of the admonition to silence and quiet recollection. It is an age of hurry and excitement. The simple life which satisfied our forefathers no longer

[1] Long's translation, iv. p. 3, vii. p. 28.
[2] See Farrar's *Seekers after God*, p. 266.
[3] "Sea Dreams."

satisfies us. The craving for amusement has infected all classes of society. Of some persons, indeed, it may be said—

> "They see all sights from pole to pole,
> They glance, and nod, and bustle by;
> And never once possess their soul
> Before they die."

Of almost all of us it must be confessed that—

> "The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
> Little we see in Nature that is ours;
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!"

There is abundant need, therefore, with the saintly William Penn,[1] "to stop, and step a little aside out of the noisy crowd, and incumbering hurry of the world, and calmly to take a prospect of things"; to ask ourselves with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his *Aids to Reflection*,[2] "If you are not a *thinking* man, to what purpose are you a *man* at all?"

[1] *Some Fruits of Solitude*, Preface, p. xxx.

[2] The Preface, p. xix.

2. Its Place in Hebrew Literature.

This habit of silent meditation was characteristic of the Hebrew mind. We are told that the patriarch Isaac[1] went out to meditate in the fields at eventide. To Jacob, on his way to Haran, when the sun went down, the place whereon he lay became a Bethel, none other than the House of God, and the gate of heaven. Moses, in the land of Midian, minding the sheep of Jethro his father-in-law, learnt in solitude the lesson of life.

> "Love did he find where poor men lie;
> His daily teachers were the woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

So with David on the downs at Bethlehem; and with the dauntless prophet in the silent wilderness.

We turn to the Psalter. How characteristic of this wonderful book is the grace of meditation! It is this that has made it the devotional handbook of the world. In psalm after psalm we listen, as it were, to the

[1] Gen. xxiv. 63.

solemn soliloquy of the author with his own soul, or with God. The "practice of the Presence of God" has become habitual with him. "I have set God," he says, "always before me."[1] He thinks and speaks in the very audience-chamber of God; "Ponder[2] my words, O Lord; consider my meditation." Or again, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight."[3] There is much prayer that is petition in the Psalter, but prayer that is meditation is no less common. "My soul truly waiteth still upon God,"[4] is the Psalmist attitude of mind. St. Chrysostom used to say that "the spirit and soul of the whole Book of Psalms is contracted into Psalm 63"; and in Psalm 63 there is no petition. It is the psalm beginning—

"O God, thou art my God, earnestly do I seek thee,
My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh craveth for thee,
In a dry and weary land, where no water is."

[1] Ps. xvi. 8.
[2] Ps. v. 1.
[3] Ps. xix. 14.
[4] Ps. lxii. 1.

As Dr. Perowne,[1] who quotes the saying of St. Chrysostom, truly says, this is unquestionably one of the most beautiful and touching psalms in the whole Psalter. There is gladness in it, there is praise, there is the most exalted sense of communion with God, there is the longing for His presence as the chiefest of all blessings; but "there is not one word of asking for temporal or even for spiritual good."

As special features in the Hebrew picture we may note—

(a) *Topics of Meditation.*

Various are the Psalmist's topics of meditation. Sometimes, with the shepherd-poet on the downs, he gazes up into the depths of the starry sky, and considers the heavens,[2] the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which He has ordained. Sometimes he regards the glories and beauties of nature, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works," he cries,[3] "in wisdom hast thou made them all;

[1] Vol. i. p. 504. [2] Ps. viii. 3.
[3] Ps. civ. 24.

the earth is full of thy riches." At other times he thinks of God's "wonders in old time"—

> "I remember the days of old;
> I meditate on all thy works;
> I muse on the work of thy hands."[1]

The story of past ages provides him with abundant food for meditation. "Not pathetic only," as Matthew Arnold truly said, "but profound also, and of the most solid substance, was that reply made by the old Carthusian monk to the trifler who asked him how he managed to get through his life." He answered in the words of the Psalmist, "Cogitavi dies antiquos et annos æternos in mente habui."[2]

(b) *Midnight Meditation.*

Very striking is the way in which the Hebrew Psalmist seems to regard the night as the special season of meditation. In the silence and solitude of the night he pours out his heart before God. He reviews his

[1] Ps. cxliii. 5. [2] Ps. lxxvii. 5.

own life; he considers the days that are past. "Commune with your own heart," he says, "upon your bed, and be still."[1] He listens to the still, small voice of conscience; "my reins also admonish me in the night season."[2] In times of depression, his heart saddened with "sorrow's crown of sorrow in remembering happier things," he cries—

> "I call to remembrance my song in the night:
> I commune with my own heart;
> And search out my spirits."[3]

He turns for comfort to the God of his salvation—

> "I remember thee upon my bed,
> I meditate on thee in the night-watches."[4]

Entirely in keeping with the Psalmist's habit is good Bishop Ken's evening prayer—

> "When in the night I sleepless lie,
> My soul with heavenly thoughts supply."

Popular as are Ken's Morning and Evening Hymns, it is strange that his Midnight

[1] Ps. iv. 4. [2] Ps. xvi. 7.
[3] Ps. lxxvii. 6. [4] Ps. lxiii. 6.

Hymn, which is a companion one to the others, and appears with them in his *Manual of Prayers* composed for the use of the scholars of Winchester College, should be comparatively unknown. And yet, from a literary, no less than from a devotional standpoint, it is perhaps more beautiful than even the others. The following verses may be quoted—

"All praise to Thee in light array'd,
Who light Thy dwelling-place hast made:
A boundless ocean of bright beams
From Thy all-glorious Godhead streams.

The sun in its meridian height
Is very darkness in Thy sight!
My soul, O lighten and inflame,
With thought and love of Thy great Name.

Shine on me, Lord, new life impart,
Fresh ardours kindle in my heart;
One ray of Thy all-quick'ning light
Dispels the sloth and clouds of night."

(c) *Awakening the Dawn.*

But if not at midnight, the devout Hebrew would rise betimes in the morning to offer

his early sacrifice. "My voice shalt thou hear betimes, O Lord," cries the author of Psalm 5; "Early in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." In Psalm 57 the writer employs the singularly beautiful and poetical figure of awakening the dawn—

> "Awake up, my glory; awake, lyre and harp;
> I will awake the dawn."

In connection with this striking metaphor it will not be inappropriate to call to mind that many of our seventeenth century divines literally carried out the Psalmist's practice. The little room under the stairs may still be seen at Farnham Castle, where good Bishop Morley was wont to rise, winter and summer, at five o'clock, in order to perform his morning devotions. Izaak Walton tells us in his *Life of Dr. Donne* that "his bed was not able to detain the great preacher beyond the hour of four in the morning." Thomas Ken, relates his biographer, "strictly accustomed himself to but one sleep, which often obliged him to rise at one or two o'clock of the

morning." Similar rules, for purposes of meditation, were observed by Dr. Hammond, Dr. Bull, and Archbishop Williams. In Henry Vaughan's "Mount of Olives," the heavenly-minded poet frequently insists on early rising as an aid to devotion. We should use, he says, "all convenient means to be up before the sun-rising." It was in the morning, he reminds us, that the children of Israel gathered the manna." "Heaven's gate is open when this world's is shut." In this beautiful little manual of devotion, he gives his readers several prayers and meditations to be used "when thou dost awake." And in the same spirit, he asks, in his magnificent poem on the Second Advent, called "The Dawning," at what hour wilt Thou come, in the evening, at midnight—

> "Or shall these early fragrant hours
> Unlock Thy bowers?"

It must surely be at sun-rising.

> "Indeed it is the only time
> That with Thy glory doth best chime."

(d) *Psalm cxix.—A Meditation.*

In treating of the meditative aspect of the Psalter, it is impossible to pass over Psalm 119 in silence. It is, as Professor Moulton says, "a very *tour de force* of meditative ingenuity."[1] It consists of twenty-two stanzas, according to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza is composed of eight verses; each verse (consisting of two members only), beginning with the same letter of the alphabet. It is thus made up of no less than a hundred and seventy-six sayings, and is bound together by the common feature that each verse (except one, the 122nd) contains an allusion to the law.

The psalm is an elaborate expansion of the second part of Psalm 19. It represents, as the Dean of Ely[2] says, the religious ideas of Deuteronomy developed in the communion of a devout soul with God. The "Law of the Lord," as contained in the Pentateuch,

[1] *The Literary Study of the Bible*, p. 183.

[2] The "Cambridge Bible," Psalm cxix.

while the basis of meditation is made to include all divine revelation as the guide of life. It is, as we have said, a meditation rather than a poem. There is no degree of *nexus*, as Mr. Gladstone said, to be found in it. It is lost labour to seek for any continuity or progress of thought in it. It is simply a meditation on the surpassing excellence of the law of God. That one thought dominates the entire composition. "There are but few pieces in the Psalmist's kaleidoscope," as Dr. Maclaren[1] strikingly says, "but they fall into many shapes of beauty."

The tone and language of the psalm clearly stamp it as post-exilic; but who the author was we have no means of judging. Delitzsch thinks he must have been a young man because of verse 9, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" Ewald, on the other hand, suggests that the words of verse 84, "How many are the days of thy servant," indicate one advanced in years; while Bishop Perowne and Dr. Kirkpatrick favour the idea that it was written by a man

[1] *The Psalms*, "Expositor's Bible," vol. iii. p. 244.

who had reached "the middle arch of life." It has further been conjectured that the author was in captivity, and beguiled the weariness of imprisonment by the composition of this panegyric of the law—

> "Thy statutes have been my songs
> In the house of my pilgrimage" (verse 54).

The psalm has appealed not unnaturally to many hearts. It has been called "the Psalm of the saints"; "the Alphabet of Divine love"; "the Christian's ABC of the love and power of the Word of God." St. Augustine's vision of the psalm rising like a Tree of Life in the realms of Paradise will be at once remembered. It was specially dear to Ruskin. "Of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me," he writes, "that which cost me most to learn, and which was, to my child's mind, chiefly repulsive—the 119th Psalm—has now become of all the most precious to me, in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God."

Among the individual verses associated

with some historical or biographical incident, it is interesting to notice that a passage on this psalm of meditation is the origin of the sevenfold division of the day into the canonical hours, viz., verse 164, "Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments"; while another verse (62), "At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee," is the origin of the midnight hour being kept with prayer and thanksgiving.

3. Its Observance in the Christian Church.

If the habit of devout meditation be a marked characteristic of the Hebrew mind, it has been no less conspicuous among Christian people. How many myriads of faithful disciples have imitated Christ in His love of solitude and silent meditation, as well as in His more active ministry of going about doing good. The hermits followed Him into the wilderness, and the Benedictines into the monastic cell. The long life of Thomas à Kempis was passed in the quiet

routine of copying manuscripts, of writing his little books, of instructing the novices, and of meditating in the cloister. The splendid chantry of Richard Fox in Winchester Cathedral is often spoken of as "Fox's study," for there the great and holy prelate was wont to spend some hours daily in meditation.

So with many Protestant and Puritan saints. Of Bishop Andrewes it was said that he passed five hours every day in prayer and meditation. Did not George Fox, like the patriarch of old, go out into the fields to meditate? Did not John Bunyan in Bedford Gaol spend long hours in sweet communion with God? Nowhere do we get a more beautiful picture of this habit of meditation, common to the saints of God in every age, than in the life of Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick, in the days of the Commonwealth and the Restoration.[1] In her beautiful home of Leize Priory in Essex, this Puritan saint was wont, amid many domestic distrac-

[1] See an article in my *Wildflowers of Selborne and other Papers*, p. 143.

tions, to spend two hours every morning, as soon as she was up, winter and summer alike, in "the wilderness" or plantation which bordered the old monastic fish-ponds, in meditation. The "wilderness" was her oratory, and there she gained strength and consolation in the trials and difficulties of life. Many of her meditations she committed to writing, and in the British Museum there are no less than twelve little manuscripts of what she calls *Occasional Meditations*. "If," says Dr. Walker, her "soul-father"—for this Puritan saint needed a confessor no less than a Catholic devotee—"she exceeded herself in anything as much as she excelled others in most things, it was in meditation. This was her masterpiece." One sentence may be quoted. "The way not to be alone," she wrote, "is to be alone and you will find yourself never less alone than when you are so. For certainly the God that makes all others good company must needs be best Himself." This is entirely in the spirit of the Hebrew Psalmists.

It would be better with many persons, if,

like the good Countess of Warwick, they would sometimes retire into the "wilderness" for silent thought. And if, unlike her, they have no special oratory—no sacred spot, no consecrated shrine, no venerable cathedral, no country churchyard beneath whose rugged elms or yew-tree's shade sleeps one whose memory is dear—where they can withdraw for solemn meditation, yet can they not with the good Pagan Emperor, retire into the little territory of their own hearts? And there, with the saintly Quaker poet of America[1] learn to know themselves—

> "Stand still, my soul, in the silent dark,
> I would question thee,
> Alone in the shadow drear and stark
> With God and me!"

And with this realisation of the presence of God will come a sense of quietude and peace such as filled the soul of the Psalmist. "Be still, and know that I am God." There will be felt something of "the hush among

[1] Whittier's "My Soul and I."

the silent stars," of "the calm upon the moonlit sea." Might we not, almost all of us, pray with advantage the poet's prayer,[1] as he sat beneath the trees in Kensington Gardens—

"Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live."

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[1] "Lines written in Kensington Gardens," by Matthew Arnold.

IV

THE FACE OF NATURE

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1. The Divine in Nature.

A most attractive aspect of the Psalter, and one that appeals strongly to many minds, is the deep appreciation of nature that runs throughout it. The great Humboldt declared that the Psalms "afford unquestionable evidence of a profound sensibility to Nature." It may be admitted that the Psalmist loves nature, not so much for its own sake, as because it contained for him a revelation of God. His view of nature is distinctly religious. That personification of nature, so familiar to us, was unknown to him. He knew, as Professor James Robertson well puts it,[1] "no Nature with a capital

[1] *The Poetry and Religion of the Psalms*, p. 245.

letter. He could not think of the visible universe and the phenomena of the world apart from the direct guidance of the divine hand; he saw no beauty that was not the manifestation of the divine glory." The "glamour of the earth" appealed to him, not by its own inherent inspiration, but because it spoke to him of God's power and glory. "The Hebrew odes are never merely descriptive," says Bishop Perowne.[1] "There are pictures in them of extreme beauty and vividness, but the picture is never painted for its own sake. Nature is never regarded, whether in her aspect of terror or of peace, whether in her tumult or her repose, as an end in herself. The sense of God's presence is that which gives its glory and its meaning to the natural world."

The position of the Psalmist is that of Keble in his familiar poem for Septuagesima Sunday—

> "There is a Book, who runs may read,
> Which heavenly truth imparts,

[1] *The Book of Psalms*, vol. i. p. 152.

And all the love its scholars need,
Pure eyes and Christian hearts.

The works of God above, below,
Within us and around,
Are pages in that Book to show
How God Himself is found."

2. Some Nature-Psalms.

Now while this beautiful appreciation of nature is noticeable throughout the Psalter as a whole—the wealth of metaphors from natural phenomena is alone remarkable—certain psalms are in a special sense Nature-Psalms. They are found, not in any one division of the book only, but scattered throughout the collection. The chief Nature-Psalms are those numbered 8, 19, 29, 65, 104, and 148, in our Psalter. It will be well to glance briefly at these separately.

Psalm viii.—The Glory of the Night.

This psalm, as Fuller calls it, is "A Nocturnal," and when, he says, "I cannot sleep, may I with this Psalmist entertain my waking with good thoughts." It is "a

night-piece," and as Bishop Alexander says,[1] "the world has never let it die. Those who look at the original, in a language where almost every substantive is a picture, will find ample poetical treasure to reward their search." It is clearly of the sky at night that the poet is thinking—

"When I consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers:
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained."

He does not mention the sun. And the deep blue vault of heaven, "fretted with golden fire," in the clear transparency of an Eastern night, is indeed suggestive of the illimitable majesty and mystery of the universe. In comparison with that unutterable glory, "What is man—man born of a woman, man in his frailty, his weakness, his insignificance?" The poet on the downs of Bethlehem might well feel overwhelmed at the reflection. But a truer estimate of man's position immediately follows—

"Thou hast made him but a little lower than the angels:
To crown him with glory and honour."

[1] *The Witness of the Psalms to Christ*, p. 153.

"A thousand years later," as Dr. Perowne[1] beautifully remarks, "other shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night, on the same hills at Bethlehem, while the same stars looked down upon them from heaven. But a brighter glory than the glory of the stars shone round about them; and they knew better than David himself the meaning of David's words, 'What is man?'" For to them it was said by the angel, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." In the light of that revelation, we can say with a confidence denied to the Hebrew poet that—

> "Heaven lies about us in our infancy,"

that,

> "Trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our home."

Psalm xix.—The Heavens above.

This psalm, as we have it, consists of two distinct parts, in which are celebrated respectively the revelation of God in Nature, and

[1] *The Book of Psalms*, vol. i. p. 159.

the revelation of God in His Word. Kant said that there were two things which filled his soul with awe—the starry heavens above and the moral law within. With Dr. Arnold[1] of Rugby, this psalm was a favourite, and Ruskin regarded it as one of those "parts of the Bible we are intended to make specially our own." "This Psalmist," writes Dr. Maclaren of Manchester in his illuminating commentary, "knew nothing about solar spectra or stellar distances, but he heard a voice from out of the else waste heavens which sounded to him as if it named God. . . . Dull ears do not hear these voices. . . . Carlyle said that the sky was 'a sad sicht.' The sadness and awfulness are taken away when we hear the heavens telling the glory of God. The unscientific Psalmist who did hear them was nearer the very heart of the mystery than the scientist who knows everything else about them but that."[2] In this connection the last verse of Addison's noble paraphrase may be quoted—

[1] Stanley's *Life of Dr. Arnold*, vol. i. p. 151.

[2] "Expositor's Bible," vol. i. p. 189.

"What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice or sound,
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?
In Reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
For ever singing, as they shine,
'The hand that made us is divine.'"

Psalm 29.—*The Thunder-Storm.*

This psalm is a magnificent description of a thunder-storm.[1] The thunder was to the Hebrew poet "the voice of God," and the phrase, seven times repeated, represents, as it were, successive peals of thunder. But the fury of the storm is to him full of magnificence and delight. Like Sir Walter Scott, in his childhood,—so Lockhart tells us and Dean Stanley[2] calls the passage to remembrance—"at each flash of lightning, he looked up from the heather, and clapped his hands, and cried 'Bonnie! bonnie!'" so, at each successive peal, does

[1] For a description of a thunder-storm in Palestine, see Stanley, *Jewish Church*, i. 128 n.

[2] *Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 127.

the Psalmist clap his hands in innocent pleasure. It is a revelation to him of the glory and majesty of Jehovah, "whose chariot-wheels roll in the thunder, and whose darts are the lightning." The striking poem is rendered the more beautiful by the contrast at the close. It began, as Delitzsch finely says, with *Gloria in excelsis*, it ends with *Pax in terris*. "The Lord will give his people the blessing of peace."

Psalm 65.—A Harvest Psalm.

This psalm was clearly written with reference to some particular season when the harvest had been unusually plentiful.

> "Thou hast visited the earth, and made it to overflow; thou greatly enrichest it."

The Psalmist's use of the term "visited" in connection with God is worth noticing. It is not employed, as usually among ourselves when we speak of a "visitation of God," in a bad, but in a beneficent sense. We speak of plague, pestilence, and famine as "visitations" of God. If a person is struck

dead by lightning he is said to have died by a visitation of God. The inspired Psalmist, on the other hand, attributes the exceptional richness of a magnificent harvest to the visitation of God. He holds with the author of the Book of Ruth that "God has visited his people in giving them bread" (i. 6). That is the Psalmist conception of divine visitation.

> "Thou hast crowned the year with thy goodness;
> And thy paths drop fatness."

Nature herself joins in the prevailing gladness. The little hills rejoice on every side. The poet Wordsworth speaks of the hootings of the wood-owls at evening when the earliest stars began to move along the edges of the hills—

> "They would shout
> Across the watery vale, and shout again,
> . . . With quivering peals,
> And loud halloos, and screams and echoes loud,
> Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
> Of mirth and jocund din!"

In the concluding verse of this psalm the Hebrew poet represents the pastures and valleys as shouting one to another in their

gladness. "Nothing," as Dr. Perowne says, "can be more beautiful, or more truly poetical, than the figure by which the valleys waving with corn are said themselves to shout and sing."

Psalm 104.—*The Great Hymn of Creation.*

Of all the Nature-psalms the 104th stands supreme. Great writers have vied with one another in praising this masterpiece of Hebrew poetry. The naturalist, A. von Humboldt, writes: "A single psalm, the 104th, may be said to present a picture of the entire Cosmos. . . . We are astonished to see, within the compass of a poem of such small dimension, the universe, the heavens and the earth, thus drawn with a few grand strokes." "With what an eye for gladness," says Herder,[1] "does the poet survey the earth! It is a green mountain of Jehovah, which He lifted above the waters; a paradise which He established for the dwelling-place of so many living creatures above the seas. The series of pictures which the poet here

[1] Quoted by Perowne, vol. ii. p. 234.

displays is in fact the natural history of the earth." Bacon rendered it into verse, and so did Henry Vaughan the Silurian poet. The author has been well called "the Wordsworth of the ancients, penetrated with a love for nature, and gifted with the insight that springs from love."[1] But he loves nature, because it speaks to him of God. He begins and ends his poem with the words, "Praise then the Lord, O my soul."

The general arrangement of the psalm is no doubt suggested by the story of its creation in Genesis; but the treatment of the subject presents one conspicuous difference. "The creation of Genesis is a creation of the past; the creation of the psalm is a creation of the present." The Creator is ever working. The world is not a machine wound up at creation once and for all, and then started to go of itself. It is not "a dead universe ungoverned by an absent God." The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

"Thou sendest forth thy breath, they are created;
And thou renewest the face of the ground."

[1] "Aglen," quoted by Dr. Kirkpatrick, p. 605.

The psalm deeply appealed to Charles Kingsley, who preached a large number of sermons upon it. The great botanist Bauhinus chose a verse of it—"O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches"—as the motto of his monumental work *Historia Plantarum.* The last stanzas of Henry Vaughan may be quoted—

"Therefore as long as Thou wilt give me health
I will in songs to Thy great name employ
That gift of Thine, and to my day of death
Thou shalt be all my joy.

I'll spice my thoughts with Thee, and from Thy Word
Gather true comforts; but the wicked liver
Shall be consum'd. O my soul, bless Thy Lord!
Yea, bless thou Him for ever."

Psalm 148.—*An Anthem.*

In this grand liturgical psalm the author calls upon all creation, animate and inanimate, to praise the Lord. On it is based the *Benedicite* or "Song of the Three Children,"

which, as Kingsley says, in his Preface to *Westminster Sermons*,[1] "is the flower and crown of the Old Testament, the summing up of all that is most true and eternal in the old Jewish faith, and which . . . is the charter and title-deed of all Christian students of those works of the Lord, which it calls on to bless Him, praise Him, and magnify Him for ever." In after ages it doubtless inspired St. Francis of Assisi in composing his beautiful "Song of the Creatures"; and it was beyond question in the mind of Cardinal Newman when he wrote—

> "Praise to the Holiest in the height,
> And in the depth be praise;
> In all His works most wonderful;
> Most sure in all His ways."

It is difficult to believe that the poet who wrote Psalm 148, or indeed any of the Nature-psalms, could have possibly held the mediæval notion that the earth was cursed on account of man's sin. To him and to

[1] P. xii.

all the Psalmists, the earth is a grand and noble place, "the work of God's hand, the likeness of God's countenance, the shadow of God's glory."

3. The Christian Application.

Such is the sympathy with nature which is so striking a feature of the Book of Psalms. It finds a parallel in the New Testament in the teaching of our blessed Lord. Did He not, exclaims one, consecrate anew the wonders and beauties of the world? "Nothing," as Dr. Geikie said, "escaped the eye of Jesus."[1] The poor, despised sparrows, the raven and her callow brood, the scarlet anemones of the hills, the reed shaking in the wind, the sobbing of the night wind, the sky flushed crimson on early dawn, the dogs so common in Eastern cities, the foxes and their holes on the hillside—all are noticed with evident appreciation. In all literature there is nothing more exquisitely beautiful than the passage

[1] *The Life and Words of Christ*, vol. i. p. 229.

in which Christ illustrated the love of God by pointing to the flowers and the birds.

And it is interesting to notice that of all the writings of the New Testament the one which shows the deepest appreciation of nature is the little treatise we call the Epistle of St. James, the author of which is usually identified with the Lord's brother. And it can hardly be doubted that the love of nature which breathes throughout it was learned and cherished in the village home of Nazareth in company with Him of whom it was afterwards said that "the winds and the sea obey him."[1]

It cannot be said that this appreciation of nature, which is so striking a feature in the Hebrew Psalter, has been conspicuous in the teaching of the Christian Church. The antagonism of religion to science, from the days of Galileo to those of Darwin, is a melancholy chapter in her history. And yet many of Christ's best and truest servants have been deeply in sympathy with nature. Did not

[1] See Plummer's *St. James*, in the "Expositor's Bible," p. 86.

St. Anthony say, "My Bible is the green book of created things"? Think of St. Cuthbert among the wild-fowl in the Isle of Farne; and of St. Guthlac in the fens of Lincolnshire. Did not St. Francis of Assisi, the most lovable of all of the saints, call all living creatures his brothers and sisters? Or read the *Table-Talk* of Martin Luther, and see how he loved the birds and flowers, for "these too," he used to say, "are God's Bibles." The Catholic St. Francis and the Protestant Luther would alike have endorsed the teaching of the Anglican poet—

> "He prayeth well, who loveth well,
> Both man, and bird, and beast;
> He prayeth best, who loveth best,
> All things both great and small,
> For the dear Lord who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all."

A deeper recognition of this aspect of the Psalter will enlarge our outlook on the world, and will add dignity and cheerfulness to life. With the Hebrew poets we shall see God in everything and everything in God. We shall learn to associate all the beauty and

wonder of creation with God. With the gentle and heavenly-minded Silurist, we shall feel that

> "Every tree, herb, flower
> Are shadows of His wisdom and His power."

With Mungo Park in the desert the humblest form of vegetation will speak of God's providence and care. We shall recognize with Charles Kingsley that "beauty is God's handwriting, God's image," that "it is a wayside sacrament, a cup of blessing," and so "welcome it in every fair landscape, and every fair flower, and drink it in with all our eyes, and thank Christ for it, who is Himself the well-spring of all beauty, who giveth all things richly to enjoy."[1] With Robert Browning we shall say—

> "This world's no blot for us
> Nor blank; it means intensity, and means good;
> To find its meaning is my meat and drink."

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[1] *True Words for Brave Men*, p. 160.

V

THE OIL OF GLADNESS

V

THE OIL OF GLADNESS

It is true, as Lord Bacon said, that "if you Listen to David's Harpe, you shall heare as many Herselike Ayres, as Carols,"[1] yet in the Book of Psalms carols are to be found in striking abundance. Such expressions as "Praise the Lord," "Rejoice in the Lord," "Sing ye merrily," "Take the psalm, bring hither the tabret, the merry harp, with the lute," "Serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song," "Let the righteous be glad, and rejoice before God, let them also be merry and joyful,"—are characteristic of the Psalter. "They express," said Dean Stanley,[2] "the sacred duty of being happy. Be happy, cheerful, and thankful as

[1] *Essays*, "Of Adversitie."

[2] *The Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 129.

ever we can, we cannot go beyond the Psalms. They laugh, they shout, they cry, they scream for joy."

This is an aspect of the Jewish Psalter on which it is well sometimes to dwell. The condition of mind of the first disciples, when, in the earliest record, we are told that "they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart,"[1] can no longer be said to be characteristic of Christian people. This age is rather one of hurry and excitement, of discontent and pessimism. The sweet virtues of cheerfulness and simplicity are becoming rarer among us. We have forfeited our "ancient English dower of inward happiness."

It will not of course be denied that there is an appalling amount of sin and suffering in the world, and no true disciple of the "Man of Sorrows" will ever close his ears to "the still sad music of humanity." But to regard only the darker side of existence, to walk through the world with downcast eyes and gloomy countenance, to dwell on the thorns and briars of the wilderness, and

[1] Acts ii. 46.

never to notice the roses and lilies of life, is surely ingratitude to Him, who, as Charles Kingsley said, "made love, and marriage, and little children, the wings of butterflies, and the songs of birds, who rejoices in his own works, and bids those who truly reverence him, rejoice likewise." It is to incur the punishment of those whom the divine Dante, in his immortal poem, places in the darkness of the Stygian pool, where he hears them sighing—

> "Once we were sad
> In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun;
> Now in this murky darkness are we sad."[1]

1. The Jubilant Note.

When we turn to the Psalter, the hymn-book of the Jewish Church—and psalms and hymns and spiritual songs often reveal the prevailing complexion of religion more than canons and articles, more even than prayers and discourses—we can hardly fail to be struck with the note of exultant gladness

[1] *Inferno*, Canto vii.

which runs throughout it. It is not the note of the present generation which rather finds expression in the wail of the poet, "Behind the veil, Behind the veil"; it is a note of passionate exultation. Listen to the opening words of Psalm 47: "O clap your hands together, all ye people; O sing unto God with a voice of melody." Or this verse (2) from the jubilant anthem we call Psalm 149, "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their king." The 68th Psalm, dear to the heart of Oliver Cromwell, which supplied him with his famous exclamation as the sun rose above the hills of Dunbar, is also noticeable for the stress laid upon that joyful aspect of religion not always associated with the ethics of Puritanism: "Let the righteous be glad and rejoice before God: let them also be merry and joyful" (verse 3).

2. In Public Worship.

Very often this spirit of exultation is closely connected with the services of the

sanctuary. Hence from early times the 95th Psalm—

> "O come, let us sing unto the Lord;
> Let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation,"

has been used as an introduction to the Psalms for the day. "Before the beginning of their prayers," wrote St. Athanasius of the practice of the Church of Constantinople, "Christians invite and exhort one another in the words of this psalm." The custom has been followed in the Church of England; and it is worth noticing that, at Matins and Evensong, the psalms chosen as alternatives to the New Testament canticles are of a like joyous character. As an alternative to the *Benedictus* we have the *Jubilate*, "O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands, serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song," which in its metrical version is universally known and loved as the "Old Hundredth"; while, at the evening service, as alternatives to the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc Dimittis*, Psalms 98 and 67 are appointed, in both of which we are called

upon to shew ourselves joyful before the Lord.

Or let us take Psalms 42–43, beginning—

> "As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
> So longeth my soul after thee, O God,"

which is "a monument of the spirituality and the joyousness of the religion of Israel." The writer is in exile, and as Calvin truly says, his longing for God is a longing for His sanctuary and its ordinances. His heart is heavy with "sorrow's crown of sorrows," which the poet tells us is "remembering happier things," when he "went with the multitude, and brought them forth into the House of God." But listen to the splendid prayer with which he concludes his lamentation—

> "O send out thy light and thy truth, that
> they may lead me, and bring me unto thy
> holy hill, and to thy dwelling,
> And that I may go unto the altar of God,
> even unto the God of my joy and
> gladness; and upon the harp will I
> give thanks unto thee, O God, my God."

So with that exquisite little collection of psalms (120–134) known as "Songs of Degrees" (A.V.), or "Songs of Ascents" (R.V.) which, in all probability, represents the Pilgrims' Psalter—the collection of hymns used by the caravans of pilgrims "going up" to keep the yearly feasts at Jerusalem. How many of them breathe the spirit of quiet gladness in the Lord. It is specially so with Psalms 121 and 122. Like the pious pilgrims, in mediæval England, to the shrine of St. Swithun at Winchester or of St. Thomas at Canterbury, the Hebrew poet was glad when they said unto him, "Let us go into the House of the Lord." Even in the Psalter, the 121st Psalm is remarkable for the power and beauty of its simple trust in God. It has been called the pilgrims' or the travellers' psalm, and many good Christians, John Hooper the martyred Bishop of Gloucester, David Livingstone the greatest of modern missionaries, and James Hannington the first Bishop of Equatorial Africa, have used it in this connection. It was specially dear to the sweet Silurian poet,

Henry Vaughan, who rendered it into verse—

> "Up to those bright and gladsome hills,
> Whence flows my weal and mirth,
> I look and sigh for Him who fills,
> Unseen, both heaven and earth."

3. The Note of Confidence in God.

In the same collection of Pilgrim Psalms we meet with several pieces which breathe the spirit of calm and trustful happiness, the outcome of entire dependence upon God. They seem to be almost an anticipation of the Master's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, when He called upon the weary and heavy-laden not to be over-anxious about the morrow, for that morrow was in a Father's keeping. We have already referred in a former section to Psalm 127, which has been well called the Hebrew "Cottar's Saturday Night," beginning, "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it," on which Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning has written one of her most touching poems. We may

be permitted to quote the first verse of it—

> "Of all the thoughts of God that are
> Borne inward into souls afar,
> Along the Psalmist's music deep,
> Now tell me if that any is
> For gift or grace surpassing this—
> 'He giveth His beloved sleep'?"

It is the same with Psalm 128, the "Home, sweet Home" of the Hebrew race as Dr. Samuel Cox beautifully calls it. Luther terms it an Epithalamium or marriage song, and it is appropriately used in the marriage service of the Church of England. The happiness and peace of domestic life passed in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is nowhere more exquisitely portrayed.

All through the Psalter we meet with illustrations of this gladness in religion, this condition of inward happiness which comes from the friendship of the soul with God. The author of the evening hymn, which we call Psalm 4, is evidently in circumstances of difficulty, if not of actual peril, but he knows a joy with which the joy of harvest

cannot be compared. "I will lay me down in peace," he says, "and take my rest; for it is thou, Lord, only, that makest me dwell in safety" (verse 9). The calm serenity and peace that runs through every line of the 23rd Psalm is such that a great writer has declared it to be the most complete picture of happiness that ever was or can be drawn. In the practice of the presence of God, the writer of Psalm 16 has found the secret of happiness: "In thy presence is the fulness of joy; at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore." The 32nd Psalm is one of the seven penitential psalms, and is appointed for use on Ash-Wednesday, but the writer has passed through the water-floods, and is compassed about with songs of deliverance, and he would have others share his joy—

"Be glad, O ye righteous, and rejoice in the Lord,
And be joyful, all ye that are true of heart" (ver. 12).

4. The Duty of Cheerfulness.

The motto of good Bishop Hacket, "Serve God, and be cheerful," is one eminently

in keeping with the spirit of the Psalter. And so is that patriarchal prayer, which Robert Louis Stevenson composed, and read aloud to his family on the evening before his death :—"Be with our friends ; be with ourselves. Go with each one of us to rest ; if any awake, temper to them the dark hours of watching ; and when the day returns to us, our sun and comforter, call us with morning faces and with morning hearts—eager to labour—eager to be happy, if happiness shall be our portion ; and if the day be marked to sorrow—strong to endure it. We thank Thee and praise Thee ; and in the words of Him to whom this day is sacred, close our oblation." Yes, "eager to be happy, if happiness shall be our portion "—how many of us have need to pray that prayer. For, as Stevenson says elsewhere,[1] there is perhaps no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy.

"The world is too much with us ; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers ;
Little we see in Nature that is ours ;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!"

[1] *Virginibus Puerisque*, p. 122.

We need more of the spirit of the Hebrew Psalmists who, in the fulness and buoyancy of their gladness, would offer us "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." So, like the early disciples, should we serve God "with gladness and singleness of heart." So should we "add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier." So should we "travel on life's common way in cheerful godliness."

VI

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

VI

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

Closely akin to the sense of gladness in religion, which we considered in our last study, is the feeling of thankfulness to Almighty God for all the benefits that He hath done unto us. *Est Deo Gratia* was the motto of good Bishop Fox, which may be seen again and again repeated on his architectural work in Winchester Cathedral, and that expression might almost stand as the motto of the Book of Psalms.

I. The Book as a Whole.

In the Hebrew Bible the title of the collection is *Book of Praises*, or simply *Praises*, or *Praise-Songs*. This name probably originated in the use of the collection as the hymn-book of the Second Temple. For,

as the Dean of Ely points out, "while many of the Psalms cannot be so designated, yet no more fitting name could be found for a book, of which praise and thanksgiving are predominant characteristics, and which ends with a diapason of Hallelujahs."[1]

Of the three parts, or divisions, into which the Psalter appears to be naturally divided, the last, which comprises Books IV. and V. of the Hebrew Bible (Psalms 90–150), differs[2] from the two preceding collections in containing a far larger proportion of psalms of a liturgical character, or psalms composed with a view to use in the public worship of the Temple. It is further noticeable that this third division of the Psalter contains a number of smaller, independent collections, which seem to have been made at different times. Thus, we have the Hallel Psalms (113–118), the Psalms of Ascent (120–134), two little groups of Psalms assigned to David (108–110 and 138–145), and the Hallelujah Psalms (146–150).

[1] *The Book of Psalms*, vol. iii. p. xv.

[2] See Driver's *Introduction to the O.T.*, p. 350.

It is in some of these independent groups, especially in those of a liturgical character, that the element of praise and thanksgiving is specially prominent. The Psalms of Ascent, as we have already noticed,[1] clearly constitute a little hymn-book in itself, probably arranged for the use of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for the yearly festivals. Not unnaturally the aspect of worship is conspicuous. Like the Canterbury pilgrims in after ages, the heart of the pious Hebrew was "glad when they said unto him, Let us go to the House of the Lord"—

> "For thither the tribes went up, even the tribes of the Lord; to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."

As the mountains which stand round about Jerusalem, especially Mount Zion which he loved, come into sight, with joy and gladness he would "lift up his eyes unto the hills." His happiness is complete, when his feet are standing within the gates of Jerusalem.

[1] P. 85.

"For the Lord hath chosen Zion;
He hath desired it for his habitation.
'This is my resting-place for ever:
Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.'"

There remains, as Professor Moulton says,[1] the departure from the Temple, when the pilgrims thus greet the Night-Watch—

"Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord!
Who by night stand in the house of the Lord;
Lift up your heads in the sanctuary,
And bless ye the Lord"—

With the answer of the Night-Watch—

"The Lord bless thee out of Zion;
Even the Maker of heaven and earth."

2. The Various Groups.

We may notice in detail one or two of the other groups of psalms in which this feeling of thanksgiving is prominent. We will take the Hallel and the Hallelujah Psalms, with which the Book closes.

[1] *Introduction to the Literature of the Bible*, p. 237.

Psalms 113–118.—*The Hallel.*

This collection of eight psalms, known among the Jews as the *Hallel* or Hymn of Praise, also as the *Egyptian Hallel* because of the exquisite little poem beginning "When Israel came out of Egypt" (Ps. 114), was sung at the three great festivals of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles; as well as at the feast of Dedication and at the New Moons. At the family celebrations of the Passover the *Hallel* was divided into two parts, Psalms 113 and 114 being sung before the repast, and Psalms 115–118 after it when the fourth cup had been filled. This second part was, in all probability, "the hymn" which our Lord and His disciples sung[1] before they left the upper room, and went out unto the Mount of Olives.

Of these six psalms which constitute the *Hallel* the 118th gives fullest expression to the spirit of thanksgiving. It was clearly composed for some festal occasion to which allusion is made in verse 24—

[1] Mark xiv. 26.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it";—

but what the special day was it is impossible definitely to decide. Evidently it is a post-exilic psalm, and designed for Temple worship; and the occasion may have been, as Ewald suggested, the first celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles after the Return; but more probably, with Stier and Perowne, the first celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles after the completion of the Second Temple, of which we have an account in the 8th chapter of Nehemiah.

The psalm is a national psalm, as we might say a national *Te Deum*, an expression of thanksgiving on the part of the nation—

"O give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good:
For his mercy endureth for ever.
Let Israel now say,
That his mercy endureth for ever."

Thus the *Hallel* psalms have naturally lent themselves to occasions of thanksgiving. It will be remembered that the glad spirits in

Dante's poem[1] chant the 114th Psalm (*In exitu Israel de Egypto*) as the swift bark bears them over the waters to the mount of purification. The opening words of the 115th Psalm—

> "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,
> But unto thy name give the praise,"

was sung by the whole English army, on bended knees, after the battle of Agincourt by command of Henry v., as we are reminded by Shakespeare[2]—

> "Do we all holy rites;
> Let there be sung *Non Nobis* and *Te Deum.*"

Part of the 116th Psalm is used in the English Church as one of the alternative psalms in the Office for the Thanksgiving of Women after Child-birth, commonly called "The Churching of Women." The 117th Psalm, the shortest, but one of the grandest in the book, was sung by the Parliamentary army "at the foot of Doon Hill," by order

[1] *Purgatorio*, Canto ii.

[2] *King Henry V.*, iv. viii. 128.

of "the Lord General" Cromwell, after the battle of Dunbar.

The *Hallel* must not be confused with *the Great Hallel*, as the 136th Psalm is known in the liturgical language of the Jews. This National Anthem of the wilderness, as Professor Moulton[1] calls it, is distinguished by the second line of each verse being the response or refrain, "For his mercy endureth for ever." The Psalmist surveys the history of Israel, from the smiting of Egypt to the inheriting of the Promised Land, and sees in each step, evidence of the loving-kindness of the Lord. The fine version of this psalm, written by John Milton at the age of fifteen when an undergraduate of Christ's College, Cambridge, is well known. The first verse may be quoted—

> "Let us with a gladsome mind,
> Praise the Lord for he is kind;
> For his mercies aye endure,
> Ever faithful, ever sure."

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[1] *Introduction to the Literature of the Bible*, p. 223.

Psalms 146–150.—*The Hallelujah Psalms.*

"The long-drawn music of the Psalter closes," says Dr. Alexander Maclaren,[1] "with five 'Hallelujah' psalms, in which, with constantly swelling diapason, all themes of praise are pealed forth, until the melodious thunder of the final psalm, which calls on everything that has breath to praise Jehovah." Each of the five psalms begins and ends with the Hebrew word *Hallelujah*, rendered into English, in both the A.V. and the R.V., "Praise ye the Lord." Bishop Perowne in his translation of the Psalter has—after much hesitation, he tells us—retained the Hebrew form; and it will be admitted that the word Hallelujah, like Hosanna and Amen, has become current in our language. The word appears for the first time in the Psalter, and is found, indeed, nowhere else in the Old Testament; although it occurs in one or two places in the Apocrypha.[2] From the Old Testament the word passed into the New,

[1] *The Book of Psalms*, in "Expositor's Bible," vol. iii. 434.

[2] See Tob. xiii. 18 and 3 Macc. vii. 13.

where in Rev. xix. 1–10 it forms the keynote of the heavenly hymn of praise.

The one Hebrew word which, as Dean Stanley said, is of the "very pith and marrow" of the Psalter, is the word "Hallelujah," and it is fitting that the book should close with a series of "Hallelujah" psalms. From very early times these psalms have been used in the daily morning service of the Jewish synagogue. One of them, the 147th, gives expression to the nation's gratitude for Jehovah's special care—

"He declareth his word unto Jacob,
His statutes and ordinances unto Israel.
He hath not dealt so with any nation:
Neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws"
(vers. 19, 20).

Another, the 148th, which we have already noticed in Lecture IV., celebrates God in nature, and calls on heaven and earth to praise the Lord. The 149th represents the "zealot temper" of the old dispensation—

"To be avenged of the heathen,
And to rebuke the people";

while the 150th, with a larger outlook, calls upon "everything that hath breath" to praise Jehovah. "Not priests and Levites only, but all Israel; not Israel only, but all mankind; not all mankind only, but every living thing, must join in the chorus of praise. The universe is God's Temple, and all its inhabitants should be His worshippers."[1]

3. The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.

But while the note of praise, as heard in the worship of the sanctuary, is naturally most conspicuous in the third or liturgical division of the Psalter, we meet with the spirit of thanksgiving throughout the book. Nowhere is it more prominent than in Psalm 50, where the author insists upon the truth, that the sacrifice which meets with God's highest approval is the sacrifice, not of bulls and goats, but of a loving and grateful heart. This aspect of the subject demands the fullest recognition in treating of the "beauty of holiness."

The inspired author of Psalm 50 has learnt

[1] Dr. Kirkpatrick, "Cambridge Bible," vol. iii. 833.

in the school, not of the priest, but of the prophet. With him a thankful heart is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice.

"Thinkest thou," he represents the Almighty as asking—

> "Thinkest thou that I eat bulls' flesh,
> Or drink the blood of he-goats?" (13).

But—

> "Sacrifice unto God thanksgiving;
> And pay thy vows unto the Most High:
> And call upon me in the day of trouble;
> So will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me" (14, 15).

This teaching, that obedience and thanksgiving are the true fulfilling of the law, is in keeping with the sentiments of the prophets. It is Isaiah,[1] "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? said the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts." But, "wash you, and make you clean; cease to do evil: learn to do well." It is Micah,[2] "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil?

[1] i. 11, 16. [2] vi. 7.

He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" It is Hosea,[1] "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." It is Jeremiah,[2] "I spake not unto your fathers concerning sacrifice; but this I commanded them, Obey my voice." So with our Psalmist. We turn to verse 23. In the A.V., and in the Prayer-Book version of the Psalter, the rendering "offereth praise" misses the allusion to the Mosaic sacrifices. But in the R.V. this is fully brought out—

> "Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me;
> And to him that ordereth his conversation aright,
> Will I show the salvation of God."

It is not, indeed, that the Mosaic sacrifices are altogether condemned; but, apart from their moral significance, they have no real value in the sight of God. In the spirit of the Psalmist, the saintly Quaker poet of America cries—

[1] vi. 6. [2] vii. 22, 23.

"Our Friend, our Brother, and our Lord
What may thy service be?—
Not name, nor form, nor ritual word,
But simply following thee.

Thy litanies, sweet offices
Of love and gratitude,
Thy sacramental liturgies
The joy of doing good.

The heart must ring thy Christmas bells,
Thy inward altars raise;
Its faith and hope thy canticles,
And its obedience praise."[1]

4. The New Testament.

And this great duty of thanksgiving, so conspicuous in the Psalter, is no less prominent in the New Testament. We see illustrations of it in our Blessed Lord's own custom, and in His teaching. The story of the cleansing of the lepers is a parable for all time on the duty of thankfulness and gratitude. In the institution of the Lord's Supper, special mention is made of the Master "giving thanks," and it seems prob-

[1] Whittier's "Our Master."

able that within a very few years of His departure the name "Eucharist" came to be associated with that holy rite.[1] How lofty a view St. Paul took of this duty appears from his habit of beginning almost all his Epistles with an expression of thanksgiving, as well as from numerous passages in his writings![2] In the Epistle to the Hebrews we meet with the very conception of the author of Psalm 50, in regarding thanksgiving as a "sacrifice" well-pleasing to God. "Let us offer up," says the writer,[3] "a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips giving thanks to his name." This is a sacrifice that will please the Lord "better than a bullock which hath horns and hoofs."

The very great prominence given to the duty of thanksgiving, alike in the New Testament and in the Psalter, is worthy of our careful attention. For there is perhaps no

[1] See Dean Stanley on 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

[2] See note of Bishop Lightfoot on 1 Thess. i. 2, *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 8.

[3] Heb. xiii. 15.

duty that is so frequently neglected. The poet tells us that—

> "Our torments may by length of time become
> Our elements";

and so it may be with our blessings.

"God showers down His benefits upon us with both hands, large and free, and we receive them as a matter of course, and never consider whose love has bestowed them; and thus," says Bishop Perowne,[1] "in our unthankfulness we rob God of His honour." On the other hand, we meet with a striking example of the spirit of thankfulness, after the manner of the Hebrew Psalmists, in Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*, which the author tells us is "a picture of his own disposition." The book is one which, as Charles Lamb wrote to Coleridge, "would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it." The writer's heart is full of gratitude to God for the simple blessings of life—a fine day, a cheerful companion, a few hours' fishing, the songs of birds, the beauty of

[1] *The Psalms*, vol. i. p. 425.

flowers. He thanks God for the green meadows "chequered with water-lilies and lady-smocks," for "the cowslip bank," for "the sweet smell of lavender." Listening to the notes of the nightingale, he exclaims, "Lord, what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such music on earth." Resting in "the cool shade of a honeysuckle hedge," he invites his companion to join with him in thankfulness to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. "Every misery that I miss," he says,[1] "is a new mercy, and therefore let us be thankful." . . . "Let not the blessings we receive daily from God make us not to value or not praise Him because they be common; let us not forget to praise Him for the innocent mirth and pleasure we have met with since we met together. What would a blind man give to see the pleasant rivers, and meadows, and flowers, and fountains that we have met with since we met together? And this, and many other like blessings, we enjoy daily." And yet again, "I will tell you,

[1] *The Compleat Angler*, chap. xxi.

scholar, I have heard a grave divine[1] say that God has two dwellings, one in heaven, and the other in a meek and thankful heart."

It is further of interest to notice that the honest fisherman justifies the description of David as a man after God's own heart, by recalling the fact that "he abounded more with thankfulness than any other that is mentioned in holy Scripture, as may appear," he says, "by his book of Psalms." Izaak Walton's estimate of the Psalter is right. It is an abiding witness to the Duty of Thanksgiving. It calls upon us to say with St. Chrysostom, "Glory be to God for all things"; and with good Bishop Fox, *Est Deo Gratia.*

[1] Dr. Donne, Dean of St. Paul's.

VII

THE PSALTER AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

VII

THE PSALTER AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

It would not be right, even in the briefest and most cursory consideration of the Psalter, to pass over in entire silence those aspects of its teaching which seem to fall short of the fuller revelation of the New Testament. In some respects, as we have already seen, notably in that of communion with God, the sense of true religion is so sublime that it has never been surpassed, save in the life and sayings of our Lord. But the Psalter is a national collection of lyrical poetry, composed by men of widely different character and outlook, and covering a long period of Jewish history. And it would clearly be unreasonable to attempt to seek in so varied and heterogeneous an

anthology for any uniform standard of ethics or teaching.

Moreover, it should be remembered that God's revelation of Himself was a gradual one. He spoke to men as they were able to bear it. Slowly, and as it were fold by fold, He withdrew the veil that obscured His countenance. He who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past unto the fathers in the prophets, at length spake unto us in His Son. And it would be unreasonable, and contrary to all analogy as to what we know of God's dealings with men, to expect to find in the Old Testament —in the rough days of the Monarchy, at the time of the Exile, or of the Return from Babylon—so clear and lofty a revelation of the divine will and purpose as we meet with in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles.

It will not therefore be a matter of surprise, it need not arise any feelings of misgiving or apprehension, if we are called upon frankly to acknowledge that in some respects the spirit of the Old Testament is not the spirit of the New, that the ethics of certain

of the Psalms are not those of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount. We shall recognise the fact as part of God's providence or plan in that revelation of Himself, the record of which is preserved for us in the pages of the Bible. And the recognition of it will lift a weight of difficulty and uneasiness from our minds, and enable us to accept, with a clearer intellectual perception, the progressive nature of that divine revelation which culminated in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The main difficulty as regards the standard of feeling and morality in the Psalter is undoubtedly the presence of the imprecatory or cursing psalms, which has caused much distress and perplexity among Christian people. We propose to consider somewhat fully this aspect of the Psalter. Among other points of limitation, in comparison with the fuller teaching of the New Testament, may be mentioned the dim hope of immortality, which we have already alluded to in a former study; the problems, which pressed heavily on the soul of the pious Hebrew, of the sufferings of the righteous and the prosperity

of the wicked; and the assertions of innocence, almost of self-righteousness, which are occasionally met with.

1. The Imprecatory Psalms.

These curses or imprecations are found chiefly in four psalms, the 7th, 35th, 69th, and 109th; while in Psalm 137 we meet with the truly awful malediction, occurring with strange incongruity at the close of an elegy of singular pathos and beauty, "O daughter of Babylon, happy shall he be that taketh thy children and dasheth them against the stones." "Not even in the wars of Joshua," as Dean Stanley said, "or the song of Deborah, does the vindictive spirit of the ancient dispensation burn more fiercely than in the imprecations of the 69th, 109th, and 137th Psalms."[1] Take these words from Psalm 69—

> "Let their eyes be blinded, that they see not;
> And ever bow thou down their backs.
> Let their habitation be void;
> And no man to dwell in their tents.

[1] *Jewish Church*, vol. ii. 128.

Let them fall from one wickedness to another,
And not come into thy righteousness.
Let them be wiped out of the book of the living,
And not be written among the righteous."

Such curses become the more terrible when a man's relations are included in the malediction. What must be the effect on the mind of intelligent Indian or Japanese, pertinently asks Professor Percy Gardner,[1] who, attending the service of an English Church, hears the congregation solemnly singing—

" Let his days be few:
And let another take his office.
Let his children be fatherless:
And his wife a widow.
Let his children be vagabonds, and beg their bread:
Let them seek it also out of desolate places.
Let there be no man to pity him:
Nor to have compassion upon his fatherless children.
Let his posterity be destroyed:
And in the next generation let his name be clean put out" (cix. 7–12).

And such sentences do not stand alone.

" Let death come hastily upon them;
And let them go down quick into hell,"

[1] *Essays on Anglican Liberalism*, p. 149.

cries the author of Psalm 55. Or listen to this exultant jubilation—

> "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance;
> He shall wash his footsteps in the blood of the ungodly;" [1]

or this from Psalm 140—

> "Let hot burning coals fall upon them:
> Let them be cast into the fire, and into the pit, that they never rise up again" (ver. 10).

The difficulty of these and similar utterances have been felt in the past, and many have been the attempts to explain them away. Two only seem to call for serious critical examination. There is the view associated with the name of Bishop Horne, that the verbs rendered in our A.V. of the Bible as optatives might, with equal propriety, be rendered as futures. This method of translation, says Bishop Perowne,[2] would escape from the difficulty by giving us predictions for imprecations. Thus, instead of reading, "*Let* his days be few; *let* his children be

[1] Ps. lviii. 9. [2] Vol. i. p. 63.

fatherless," etc., these expositors would read, "His days *shall be* few: his children *shall be* fatherless." But this is an expedient, adds the Bishop, which does violence to the rules of language. The verbs are optatives, not futures; and they are rightly rendered so in the English version.

The other method of attempting to solve the difficulty is to regard the curses as those, not of the Psalmist, but of the Psalmist's enemies. This mode of interpretation has found many advocates. Speaking of Psalm 109, Dr. Charles Taylor said, "As thousands of serious Christians have been much distressed in reading this psalm, which is generally supposed to contain the curses of David upon his enemies, it will not be improper to inform them and future readers that, when duly considered, it will appear clearly to contain the curses of David's enemies upon David. For the curses are not about many, but about one person only: and besides, both in the beginning and at the end of the psalm, David complains of the dreadful things spoken about him by others."

But even if this view were exegetically tenable in the case of this particular psalm, which Dr. Kirkpatrick[1] considers doubtful, expressions of a similar kind are found elsewhere in the Psalter which cannot be so treated.

The imprecations, then, of the Book of Psalms remain, and, like the minatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed, must be frankly accepted in their natural and obvious sense. It is no doubt true[2] that, as a member of a covenant-keeping community, the Psalmist identified himself with the friends of God, and counted those who opposed him as God's enemies also (see Psalm 139. verses 21, 22). But the fact remains, that the Psalmist meant what he said when, with reference to his enemies, he cried—

> "Let them be wiped out of the book of the living;
> And not be written among the righteous."

Nothing but disservice to the cause of true religion can possibly come from attempt-

[1] "Cambridge Bible," Introduction, p. lxxi.

[2] Dr. W. T. Davison, article "Book of Psalms," in Hastings' *DB.*

ing to defend, with Calvin and other expositors, such utterances as these. It only leads, as history abundantly shows, to the justification of such deeds as those committed by the Crusaders under Godfrey de Bouillon at the siege of Jerusalem, or as the slaughter of the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Day. "By what law can you justify this atrocity which you would commit," asks Henry Morton, the humble minister in *Old Mortality*, of the brutal Balfour of Burley. "If thou art ignorant of it," replied Burley, "thy companion is well aware of the law which gave the men of Jericho to the sword of Joshua the son of Nun." "Yes," answered the divine, "but we live under a better dispensation, which instructeth us to return good for evil, and to pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us."

The great novelist was right. The imprecatory psalms, like the wars of Joshua, belong to the Old Dispensation and not to the New. They reflect the spirit of Elijah, not the spirit of Christ.

Nowhere is this more clearly and em-

phatically enunciated than by the Master Himself in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."[1]

These utterances, then, says Dr. Kirkpatrick, in summing up his admirable discussion on the subject, "belong to the spirit of the O.T. and not of the N.T., and by it they must be judged. They belong to the age in which the martyr's dying prayer was not, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge' (Acts 7. ver. 60), but, 'Jehovah look upon it, and require it' (2 Chron. 24. ver. 22)." "It is impossible," he adds, "that such language should be repeated in its old and literal sense by any follower of Him who has bidden us to love our enemies, and pray for them that persecute us."[2] Since, then, the

[1] Matt. v. 43, 44.

[2] "Cambridge Bible," Introduction, p. xciii.

curses of the imprecatory psalms are not only alien to the spirit of the New Testament, but are distinctly forbidden in the Sermon on the Mount, it is surely not too much to hope that before long the public use of them will be discontinued in Christian assemblies.

2. The Sense of Sin.

Another aspect of the Psalter in which the teaching seems to be defective as compared with that of the New Testament, is the sense of sin. We meet with assertions of innocency and uprightness which, as Bishop Perowne says, almost startle us by their confidence. Thus in Psalm 7. ver. 8 the Psalmist appeals to God—

> "Judge me, O God, according to my righteousness,
> And according to the innocency that is in me."

Or, in Psalm 17. ver. 3, conscious of his own integrity, He cries—

> "Thou hast tried me, and findest no evil thought in me,
> I am purposed that my mouth shall not offend."

Again, in Psalm 18, which is generally admitted to be a genuine utterance of the poet-king, he boldly says—

"The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me."

But in Psalm 26 we meet with this feeling of conscious uprightness in a still more unequivocal form. The Psalmist calls upon the Lord, with passionate entreaty, to do him justice. He pleads the integrity of his life. He offers himself to the scrutiny of the great Searcher of hearts. "Judge me," he cries—

"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me;
Try my reins, and my heart.
. . . . .
I will wash my hands in innocency;
And so will I go to Thine altar.
. . . . .
As for me, I will walk in my perfectness:
O redeem me, and be gracious unto me."

It is possible that too much has been made of these assertions of innocency.

They have no likeness whatever to the self-righteousness and self-satisfaction of the Pharisee. The Psalmist, it may well be, has been accused of some particular crime, and he is conscious of his entire innocence. His conscience is clear in the sight of God. He is no hypocrite ; and there is nothing pious or meritorious in making general confessions of depravity. Rather, with childlike trust and simple faith, he throws himself upon Jehovah, who "knoweth the heart and trieth the reins."

All the same, it must be freely admitted that "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" was not revealed to the saints of the old dispensation.[1] It it only in the light of the Cross of Calvary that sin appears "in all its blackness and malignity." And yet, here and there in the Psalter, we do meet with expressions of sinfulness so deep and profound that the Christian Church has deliberately chosen certain Psalms for use in seasons of penitence and humiliation. From the time of Origen, seven Psalms have been known as Peni-

[1] See Perowne on Psalm xxvi.

tential Psalms. In two of them especially—the 32nd and the 51st—the deepest contrition is expressed. In the latter the source of sin is recognised. David, says Robertson of Brighton,[1] "lays on himself the blame of a tainted nature, instead of that of a single fault—'Conceived in sin.' From his first moments up till then, he saw sin—sin—sin: nothing but sin." The blessedness of pardon is also realised. "The joy of penitence," writes Archbishop Alexander, "fills the 32nd Psalm. It is the idea which was clothed in flesh and blood by Him who created the Parable of the Prodigal. The 'songs of deliverance,' of which it speaks mingle with the deep swell of the Angels' joy, and the refrain that rushes from the Father's lips."[2]

It is, however, the tendency of modern criticism to minimise the personal element in the Psalter. "In the Psalmists, as such," says Dr. Cheyne,[3] the individual conscious-

[1] *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 86.

[2] *The Witness of the Psalms*, p. 126.

[3] *Origin of the Psalter*, p. 265.

ness was all but lost in the corporate. The Psalter is a monument of Church-consciousness." He would be content, with Dr. Robertson Smith, to see even in Psalm 51, simply "a prayer for the restoration and sanctification of Israel in the mouth of a prophet of the Exile." The view cannot be regarded as impossible, however contrary to traditional exegesis, and however it may appear to fail to account for the personal language of the Psalm. That a deep sense of individual sin is not of frequent occurrence in the Psalter may be at once admitted ;[1] but it seems to be clearly present in some instances, and it is difficult to understand the religious position of the Psalmist, especially his profound sense of communion with God,[2] without giving it due acknowledgment. It falls, indeed, far short of the depth of sin as revealed in the life and teaching of Jesus and in the tragedy of Calvary ; but the Psalmist is conscious that wrong-doing acts as a barrier

[1] See W. T. Davison's art. "Book of Psalms," in Hastings' *DB*, vol. iv. p. 158.

[2] See Lecture II.

between himself and God, and in a state of contrition he cries—

> "I acknowledge my sin unto thee,
> And mine unrighteousness have I not hid.
> I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord;
> And so thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin."

3. The Problems of Pain and Prosperity.

A very brief treatment of this aspect of the Psalter must suffice. Among the moral problems which disturbed the mind of the pious Hebrew under the old dispensation, was the double one of the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. We meet with it in many of the psalms; it is the special problem of the Book of Job. With the vision of human life bounded by "threescore years and ten"; or at its best with the hope of immortality but fitfully and dimly recognised, the thoughtful Jew could not but be perplexed with the patent facts of existence. He saw the wicked flourishing like a green bay-tree; while, it may be, he himself was hard at death's door. "I am

weary of my groaning," he cries, "every night wash I my bed, and water my couch with my tears."[1]

It must be remembered that among the Hebrew saints sickness and suffering and premature death were regarded as tokens of divine displeasure, and it is in the light of this belief that many Old Testament passages must be read. This is the position of the three friends in the magnificent poem we call the Book of Job. This, too, is the feeling of Hezekiah[2] in his famous lamentation, when he turned his face towards the wall. So, according to tradition, with David when, in Psalm 6, he prays—

> "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger,
> Neither chasten me in thy displeasure."

Or, in Psalm 38, when in almost identical language he cries—

> "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath:
> Neither chasten me in thy displeasure."

The conception of pain as a discipline of love had hardly entered into their calculations.

[1] Ps. vi. 6. [2] Isa. xxxviii.

The Lord's teaching[1] in the Sermon on the Mount as to the blessedness of "those that mourn," of those that "are persecuted for righteousness' sake," had not been fully revealed unto them. The teaching of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews,[2] that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," was only dimly realised. The Old Testament believer could hardly be expected to say with David Livingstone that "pain is only a means of enforcing love," or with the Christian poet of America—

"Let us be patient! These severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise,
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.

We see but dimly through the mists and vapours;
Amid these earthly damps,
What seem to us but sad, funereal tapers
May be heaven's distant lamps."[3]

The problem of the prosperity of the wicked is specially prominent in Psalms 37

[1] Matt. v. 4, 10. [2] Heb. xii. 6.
[3] Longfellow, "Resignation."

and 73. No clear light, it must be remembered, had as yet been thrown upon the New Testament doctrine of future rewards and punishments. The Psalmist is concerned with this life only, and he clings to the thought that, in spite of apparent immunity, the prosperity of the ungodly will be short-lived. "Fret not thyself," he cries—

> "because of the ungodly;
> Neither be thou envious against the evil doers.
> For they shall soon be mown down like the grass,
> And be withered even as the green herb."[1]

In Psalm 73 the thought of "the ungodly in such prosperity" weighs heavily on the mind of the poet—

> "They are in no peril of death;
> But are lusty and strong.
> They come in no misfortune like other folk;
> Neither are they plagued like other men."

The problem was too hard for solution, until he went into the sanctuary of God, when, he tells us, he understood the end of these men. "Oh!" he cries—

[1] Ps. xxxvii. 1, 2.

"How suddenly do they consume;
Perish, and come to a fearful end!"

The doctrine of inevitable retribution is the solution of the perplexing theme.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all." [1]

The wicked have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. Their sin will surely find them out. Like the splendour of the meadows they will fade away.

Yet, it will be noticed, the author of the 73rd Psalm reaches a higher stage. In spite of the incongruity of life, there is a reward for the righteous. He finds his happiness in God. In words of exquisite beauty, which, as Bishop Perowne truly says, lift us up above the world into a higher and holier atmosphere, he cries—

"Nevertheless, I am always by thee:
Thou hast holden me by my right hand.
Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel,
And afterward receive me with glory.

[1] Longfellow.

Whom have I in heaven but thee?
And there is none upon earth that I desire
in comparison of thee.
My flesh and my heart faileth:
But God is the strength of my heart, and my
portion for ever."

It is almost an anticipation of St. Paul's words, when, in his Roman prison, amid the triumph of his enemies, he wrote to his friends at Philippi—"I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."[1]

[1] Phil. iv. 11, 13, R.V.

APPENDIX

THERE is perhaps no book in the Bible to which the preacher turns so frequently as to the Book of Psalms. There are probably more sermons preached from passages in the Psalter than from any other portion of Holy Writ. Not only is it, as Mr. Gladstone said, "the highest known treasure-house of individual and personal devotion"; it is also employed in public worship to an extent far exceeding that of any other part of the Bible.

As a book of meditation it is unapproached by any of the great masterpieces of devotion. Great are the *Confessions of St. Augustine*, great is the *Imitatio Christi*, great are the *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* of Jeremy Taylor, great are Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, and Keble's *Christian Year*; but incomparably greater is David's Book of Psalms. It

remains, as Dean Church truly said, "an unique book, equally, and in equal measure, the prayer-book of public and common worship, and the chosen treasury of meditation, guidance, comfort to the individual soul."

In studying the Psalter with a view to teaching, it is difficult to exaggerate the value of Bishop Perowne's *Commentary*, and of Dr. Kirkpatrick's volumes in the "Cambridge Bible"; while for purposes of preaching, Dr. Maclaren's *Book of Psalms* in the "Expositor's Bible" will be found most stimulating and suggestive. From a more critical standpoint, Dr. Driver's chapter on the Psalms in his *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* is invaluable; and Professor W. T. Davison's article on the "Book of Psalms," in the fourth volume of Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, is most concise and useful.

For the part played by the Psalter in history and biography, abundant illustrations will be found in Dean Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. ii., Lecture xxv., in Marson's

The Psalms at Work, and in Prothero's *Psalms in Human Life*.

Among other useful books, special mention may be made of Dr. Driver's *Parallel Psalter*, of Delitzsch's *Commentary* (English translation), Dr. Cheyne's Works, Archbishop Alexander's *Witness of the Psalms to Christ*, and of Dean Church's lectures on "The Sacred Poetry of Early Religions," published in his *Gifts of Civilization*, and his sermon on "The Psalms," in *The Discipline of the Christian Character*.

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